

BACKGROUND

Family: Bonds and Belonging – a Royal BC Museum feature exhibition

June 2–October 31, 2017

“...family is *not* limited to a basic unit—large or small—but rather to an idea, a feeling. It covers so many different types of connections that one makes with other human beings during the course of their life.” – Sadhu Binning, *The Language of Family: Stories of Family Bonds and Belonging* (RBCM 2017)

This Royal BC Museum feature exhibition is an interactive exploration of the powerful bonds created by family and the sense of belonging that family can elicit. This provocative exhibition asks visitors if family is determined by blood or if it can be chosen.

Peering through the lens of First Nations and immigrant families in BC, the exhibition explores and challenges the very idea of “family” itself. The exhibition celebrates the ability of the family to incorporate difference. Difference is what unites us.

Family: Bonds and Belonging (#RBCMFamily)

Step into a living photo album as you enter the exhibition. Walk among images of BC families, both historical and contemporary, and see your own face reflected back. Confront the defining question of the exhibition: what, exactly, is family? Blood, choice, community, place?

Discover what different families have in common as they gather and spend time together. Add your voice and experiences to the exhibition in the community voices recording studio. Travel through the milestone stages of family life—growing up, marriage, separation and death. Step into our rec-room style movie theatre and watch home movies. Consider what is passed down through generations, including shared knowledge, family legacies, family treasures and genealogy.



Interactive features

The exhibition refers to the past but, to really come alive, needs the perspective of people today. That's why the Royal BC Museum is asking visitors to provide their thoughts about family. It's a truly interactive exhibition.

Visitors can add their own photos by sharing them on Twitter or Instagram using the tag #RBCMFamily.

Visitors are also encouraged to share a story about either family names, special foods, staying in touch, unique traditions or what is missing. Once they have selected their topic they can record their answer in our recording booth in the Community Voices section of the exhibition.

The final element of the exhibition, an exhibition tree invites visitors to share their perspectives about what family really means.

Foundational families

The Royal BC Museum didn't just search its own collections to make this exhibition come alive. We reached out to many families who have strong connections to BC, and asked them to share their stories, artifacts and mementoes.

Letters from H. Y. Louie to his son giving him business advice are on loan from the Louie family, owners of London Drugs and formerly IGA. The letters are housed in the Burnaby headquarters; this is the first time they have been put on public display. H. Y. Louie's advice is used as the guiding principles for the very successful family business to this day.

A trunk purchased in Moga, Punjab by Indar Singh Gill, used to carry his belongings to Vancouver when he immigrated in 1930, has been generously loaned by the Nash Gill family. From 1930-1947 Indar was separated from his wife because of discriminatory immigration laws. During this time husband and wife wrote letters in Punjabi that are also on view in the exhibition.

A saddle that belonged to Lawrence Guichon, who ran the Guichon Ranch from 1918 to 1957 is on loan from the family. The ranch is now run by the fifth generation of the family. This loan is courtesy of the Honourable Judith Guichon, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, and the Gerard Guichon Ranch Limited.



The Gurm family generously donated Balbir Gurm's wedding dress. The fabric was picked by Balbir Gurm's mother and aunt at the Shan Sarees and Fabrics, one of the few Indian stores on Main Street in Vancouver in 1970s when Balbir Gurm was in grade 12 (marriageable age). The aunt shipped it to Lucknow, the embroidery capital of India and, brought back to Vancouver. The actual wedding took place in 1984 in Vancouver.

Two hats from the Edenshaw family highlight how knowledge is passed on from generation to generation. The Haida spruce-root hat with a Raven design was woven by Isabella Edenshaw and painted by Charles Edenshaw. An unpainted hat was made by their descendant, Isobel Rorick, in 1989.

It's not what you think

BC is a diverse province in a proudly multicultural country. The centrepiece of the exhibition challenges visitors to ponder how families are the building blocks of province and nation and the ways BC families have helped shape Canada. To reflect the great diversity of the family experience in BC, the exhibition depicts families from many different cultural traditions, including First Nations, Chinese Canadian, Japanese Canadian, Indo Canadian and French Canadian.

Get together

The exhibition space encourages viewing by families, and also recognizes that different family members might have different ways of exploring the exhibition.

Families will enjoy the Kids Zone complete with an oversized TV screen-slash-theatre, where kids (and playful adults) are encouraged to have some fun together.

Another great family zone is a home movie area, a laid-back chill zone with funky carpets and 70's-era sofas where families can watch archival films about family and just take a second to relax.

Canada 150 (#Canada150)

To mark Canada's 150th year since Confederation, the Royal BC Museum is pleased to present this exhibition, celebrating BC's families and their contributions to Canada as a nation.

***Terry Fox: Running to the Heart of Canada* (#TerryFox)**

This feature exhibition, open April 12 to October 1, 2017, created by the Canadian Museum of History in partnership with the Terry Fox Foundation,



tells the story of the great Canadian hero who raised money for cancer research with his Marathon of Hope, at great personal cost to himself.

Terry Fox's family set an inspiring example of the incredible strength of family bonds. The Fox family is the driving force keeping his dream alive and has raised close to \$700 million for cancer research in Terry's name.

About the Royal BC Museum

The Royal BC Museum explores the province's human history and natural history, advances new knowledge and understanding of BC, and provides a dynamic forum for discussion and a place for reflection. The museum and archives celebrate culture and history, telling the stories of BC in ways that enlighten, stimulate and inspire. We are a hub of community connections in BC— onsite, offsite and online—taking pride in our collective histories.



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#RBCMFamily

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